

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
USICA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 14363

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM SOPN US GW UR WB
SUBJECT: GERMAN REACTION TO THE US HUMAN RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN; BERLIN ASPECT

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE AMERICAN REACTION TO THE SOVIET
TRIALS OF SCHARANSKY AND GINZBURG, AS WELL AS TO THE
HARRASSMENT OF AMERICANS IN MOSCOW, HAS DRAWN CONSIDER-
ABLE GERMAN PRESS SPECULATION. OFFICIAL COMMENT, TO THE
DEGREE TO WHICH IT EXISTS IN BONN AT THIS TIME OF THE
YEAR, HAS TENDED TO BE CAUTIOUS.

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THE GERMANS CLEARLY DO NOT WANT TO GET CAUGHT
BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION. THEY
SHARE OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THOUGH THEY DIFFER ON
TACTICS AND THOUGH THEY STRESS DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS SPECTRUM OF ISSUES. MOST OF ALL, THEY DO
NOT WANT TO GIVE THE SOVIETS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE

A SPLIT BETWEEN BONN AND WASHINGTON.

AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF RECENT SOVIET-AMERICAN TENSION HAS BEEN THE RELATIVE CALM AROUND BERLIN, THE TRADITIONAL THERMOMETER OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. IN THAT AREA, THE SOVIET DESIRE TO KEEP GOOD RELATIONS WITH BONN MAY RESTRAIN ANY SOVIET INCLINATION TO SQUEEZE US. END SUMMARY.

1. THE GERMAN PRESS, AS REPORTED IN THE ICA DAILY PRESS REVIEW, HAS REPORTED AND COMMENTED EXTENSIVELY ON US REACTION TO RECENT SOVIET VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. MUCH OF THE PRESS COVERAGE HAS FOCUSED ON THE PRESIDENT'S MOVES BETTER TO CONTROL TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. MOST GERMAN PAPERS HAVE BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO US POSITIONS AND HAVE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE PRECISION WITH WHICH THE US WAS TRYING TO ACT WITHOUT TEARING APART THE FABRIC OF SALT. ONE PAPER OBSERVED: "WASHINGTON'S ACTION AMOUNTS TO A PRECISELY AIMED POLITICAL MOVE RATHER THAN TO A REACTION OF A FRUSTRATED MAN." OTHERS HAVE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT THE DANGER OF RETURNING TO THE COLD WAR HAD TO BE KEPT IN MIND. SOME HAVE ASKED WHAT THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT ITSELF WAS DOING.

ISSUES FOR THE GERMANS
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3. FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GERMANS, IT APPEARS THAT THEY SEE TWO PRINCIPAL ISSUES:

-- THE FIRST ISSUE MIGHT BE TERMED: "WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS AND WHOSE?" THE GERMANS HAVE FOCUSED, AS ADDRESSEES KNOW, PRIMARILY ON THE RIGHT TO TRAVEL, ESPECIALLY THE RIGHT TO EMIGRATE OF ETHNIC GERMANS LIVING IN EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THEREFORE, WHILE THEY HAVE EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR PARTICULAR VICTIMS OF SOVIET PERSECUTION LIKE SCHARANSKY, THEY HAVE NOT WISHED TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO A DEGREE THAT MIGHT LEAD TO A CURTAILMENT OF EMIGRATION. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR, DURING WHICH THE LATTER EXPRESSED OUR CONCERNS ABOUT SCHARANSKY AND OUR INTEREST IN GERMAN SUPPORT, FONOFF POLITICAL DIRECTOR BLECH SAID THAT THE FRG WAS DISPOSED TO SUPPORT US BUT ARGUED THAT THE GERMANS WERE SOLVING A LOT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CASES THEMSELVES BY NON-PUBLICITY MEANS. HE SAID THE FRG HAD TO KEEP IN MIND THOSE MANY ETHNIC GERMANS WHO, BY APPLYING FOR EMIGRATION TO THE FRG, HAD LOST THEIR JOBS, HAD DENIED THEIR CHILDREN EDUCATIONAL

OPPORTUNITIES, AND HAD BEEN PERSISTENTLY AND SOMETIMES
BRUTALLY HARRASSED. FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THOSE
MANY THOUSANDS, BLECH ARGUED, THE FRG COULD DO MORE GOOD
THROUGH QUIET NEGOTIATIONS AND DETENTE THAN THROUGH
PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 14363

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-- THE SECOND ISSUE REMAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF
STAYING CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES. THIS PROBLEM WORRIES
THE GERMANS VERY DEEPLY. THEY ARE QUITE SENSISTIVE TO
THE BURGEONING SOVIET CAMPAIGN TO DRIVE A WEDGE ON
THIS ISSUE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE,
MOST SPECIFICALLY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. THEY SAW THIS
CAMPAIGN IN THE BREZHNEV VISIT AND IN MUCH THAT THEY
HAVE HEARD FROM THE RUSSIANS SINCE. WE SEE NO INCLINA-
TION HERE FOR A SEPARATE GERMAN POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET

UNION. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE EXISTENCE OF
ETHNIC GERMANS IN EASTERN EUROPE IS AN ASSET THAT THE
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SOVIETS CAN USE.

THE IMPACT IN BERLIN

4. ONE OF THE MORE CURIOUS ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT
TENSION IN SOVIET-AMERICAN AFFAIRS REMAINS THE ABSENCE
OF THE USUAL MANIFESTATION OF TROUBLES IN THE BERLIN
SITUATION. TRADITIONALLY, ANY WORSENING OF SOVIET-
AMERICAN RELATIONS WOULD BE QUICKLY REFLECTED IN SOVIET/
GDR HARRASSMENT, EITHER ALONG THE ACCESS ROUTES OF
BERLIN OR IN SOME OTHER BERLIN MATTER. THIS HAS NOT
HAPPENED. EVEN WHEN IT DOES HAPPEN, AS IT DID IN THE
FORM OF SOME TEMPORARY AUTOBAHN DELAYS ON THE MORNING
OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO BERLIN WITH CHANCELLOR
SCHMIDT, IT APPEARS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT INTENT ON
MAJOR HARRASSMENT BUT MAY SIMPLY BE MAKING A PARTICULAR
POINT -- AS IN THIS CASE -- OR EVEN HAVE INTERNAL
DISAGREEMENTS.

5. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT, AS WE HAVE EARLIER
INDICATED, THE CURRENT CALM IN BERLIN REMAINS THE PRO-
DUCT OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO WOO THE WEST GERMANS. THE
SOVIETS KNOW THAT BERLIN IS A NEURALGIC POINT IN WEST
GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THAT TOO MUCH PRESSURE MAKES
IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY BONN GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE DE-
TENTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND/OR THE GDR. WE HAVE HAD
INDICATIONS FROM SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN DIPLOMATS HERE
THAT THEY ARE DOING WHAT THEY CAN TO AVOID MAKING EX-
CESSIVE TROUBLE FOR CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, PARTLY BECAUSE
THEY ARE AFRAID OF AN ALTERNATIVE CDU/CSU GOVERNMENT AND
ALSO BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACHE TO DETENTE
WITH WEST GERMANY. WE THINK THE INCLINATION TO BE
FRIENDLY TO BONN MAY GROW IF TROUBLES WITH THE UNITED
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STATES INCREASE.

6. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG THIS MIGHT LAST IN CASE
THERE WERE SERIOUS SOVIET/AMERICAN DISAGREEMENTS.
PARADOXICALLY, THE RELATIVE CALM IN BERLIN MIGHT WELL
CONTINUE, BECAUSE UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THE SOVIETS
MIGHT BE EVEN MORE INCLINED TO WOO THE FRG. ON THE

OTHER HAND, WHAT MIGHT DEVELOP COULD BE HIGHLY SELEC-
TIVE ACTIONS INTENDED SPECIFICALLY TO HARRASS AMERICANS
(PERHAPS AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE), BUT CAREFULLY AVOIDING
DIRECT AFFRONT TO GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION OR, FOR THAT
MATTER, TO THE FRENCH AND BRITISH. IT GOES WITHOUT
SAYING THAT THIS SORT OF CAMPAIGN WOULD NOT BE EASY FOR
THE SOVIETS TO MANAGE, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF ITS IMPACT
ON WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION.

7. DESPITE THE INCREASE IN SOVIET-AMERICAN TENSION,
BERLIN MAY THUS REMAIN CALM. CURIOUSLY, THE DIFFERENT
APPROACHES BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE GERMANS ON RELA-
TIONS WITH MOSCOW MAY SERVE TO INSULATE US FROM AT
LEAST SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF TENSION
WITH MOSCOW.

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